

Melaenornis ardesiaca in East Africa

by MR. JOHN G. WILLIAMS

Received 1st October, 1958

During a recent expedition to Uganda in company with Dr. and Mrs. W. Cottrell of Harvard University, a very brief visit was paid to the Impenetrable Forest, Kigezi, south-western Uganda. In this forest *Melaenornis ardesiaca* Berlioz was encountered for the first time in East Africa; an adult male was collected.

The Impenetrable Forest region, recently made accessible from Kabale by the construction of a new road, possesses an extremely rich avifauna at present imperfectly known. Although only a few hours were spent in the forest some extremely interesting species were encountered. These included *Cercococcyx mechowi*; *Ruwenzorornis johnstoni*; another turaco, perhaps an undescribed species, predominantly green in colour with very little red in the wings; *Pholia sharpii*; *Cinnyris regius*; *Anthreptes tephrolaema*; *Nigrita fusconota*; *Spermophaga ruficapilla*; *Hyphanturgus alienus* and *Cryptospiza shelleyi*.

Mixed bird parties were observed working through the undergrowth and small trees along the margin of the forest road, and on two occasions several slaty-black rather slim birds with extremely conspicuous yellow eyes were seen—*Melaenornis ardesiaca*. The species was restless, either perching on projecting bare branches or searching the foliage in the manner of a warbler. When disturbed the birds disappeared quickly into the nearest thick tangle of undergrowth: all those observed were completely silent.

A single specimen was collected on 25th July, 1958. This is an adult male (skull fully ossified) in post breeding condition, in freshly moulted plumage with the exception of the rectrices which are still in moult.

Colours of soft parts: Iris bright pale yellow; bill and feet black.

Measurements: Culmen to base 19; wing 87; tail ca.86; tarsus 25 mm.

Stomach contents: Remains of several lepidopterous larvae and fragments of other unidentified insects. This specimen has been placed in the collection of the British Museum (Natural History) where the species was previously unrepresented.

A new Finch Lark from South West Africa

by MR. C. M. N. WHITE

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All the southern populations of *Eremopterix leucotis* (Stanley) have hitherto been known as *E.l.smithi* (Bonaparte) ranging from South West Africa to Portuguese East Africa and Northern Rhodesia. Little attention has been given to the moults and plumages of this lark, but it appears that there are two quite distinct female plumages, one with a blackish upperside in which the feathers have light edges and another with a reddish upperside

with slight dark mottling. When series are compared from various areas, it is obvious that the birds commonly placed under *smithi* are not all alike. Typical *smithi* was described from the north Transvaal, and birds from South West Africa can be separated by their female characters.

***Eremopterix leucotis hoeschi*, subsp. nov.**

Description: Males hardly separable from those of *smithi* but averaging a little whiter on the upper tail coverts. Females quite distinct; dark backed females with the feather edges lighter and greyer; red backed females much lighter and brighter.

Type: Female collected in Okahandja, South West Africa on 21st February, 1958 by W. Hoesch. In my collection.

Remarks: Six examples compared with a long series of *smithi*. Named after Mr. W. Hoesch to whom I am indebted for collecting the specimens.

The Validity of the Genus *Megaloprepia* Reichenbach

by MR. DEREK GOODWIN

Received, 10th December, 1958

In the light of Cain's recent revision of the genus *Ptilinopus* (Cain 1954), the validity of the genus *Megaloprepia* must be questioned. *Megaloprepia* was first used (Reichenbach 1852) for the species *magnifica* (Temminck). Later the genus was defined by Salvadori, when he separated the two species *magnifica* and *formosa* (G. R. Gray) from *Ptilopus* (now *Ptilinopus*) on the characters: "under wing-coverts yellow; tail rather long and rounded, first primary not attenuated at the tip" (Salvadori 1893). Some of the species now included in *Ptilinopus* also have these features. Nor are there any other characters, common to both *formosa* and *magnifica*, which would serve to separate them.

The colours and colour-patterns of *formosa* and *magnifica* agree well with those found within *Ptilinopus*. Their rather long, rounded tails set them apart from many *Ptilinopus* species but *P. subgularis* Meyer and Wigglesworth agrees perfectly with them in this respect. As has been shown elsewhere (Cain 1954), *subgularis* cannot be generically separated from the other *Ptilinopus* species. I therefore think that *formosa* and *magnifica* must be placed in *Ptilinopus*. *Megaloprepia* becomes a synonym of *Ptilinopus*. Dr. A. J. Cain, with whom I have discussed this matter and examined specimens, agrees with this decision.

References:

Cain A. J. (1954) Subdivisions of the genus *Ptilinopus* (Aves, Columbæ) Bull. Brit. Mus. (Nat. Hist.) Zool., vol. 2, No. 8.

Reichenbach, L. (1752) *Avium Systema Naturale*, p. 26.

Salvadori, T. (1893) Cat. Birds Brit. Mus., vol. 21, p. 70.